I could have drowned during Yaadein...

Have you seen a single house without photographs? Photographs of loved ones...photographs that trigger off happy memories...photographs that make us smile. Every major event that transforms our lives finds a place in the photo albums. Pictures of births, marriages and college graduations are all cherished treasures and a part of our entity. *Yaadein* was inspired by these photogrpahs and the moments and memories they bring back.

The film had another muse. For me the family has always been important and there have been many occasions when I've been called to mediate during a family crisis and act as councellor. During these sessions I realised that the bonds within most families were pretty strong. There was an outpouring of love and respect, even a desire to sacrifice. What was missing was friendship and that resulted in a gap in communication between generations. Sons and daughters looked up to their parents, listened to what they had to say, even loved them but they didn't see them as their friends.

For this, I thought, the parents, to an extent, were to be blamed. They attempted to impose their views and opinions on their children, confronted them when they were challenged. Now 50 years ago many of us were illiterate so it was easy to subdue and subjugate. After independence most families have ensured that the children went to school and to colleges too. As a result the younger generations are more well-informed and well-read. Their elders in comparison are lagging behind. That, at times, can lead to ego hassles and embarrassing situations. When children refuse to comply and conform to the wishes of their elders they are reprimanded for going against their values and breaking with tradition. Sometimes they give in out of respect for their seniors. Often they don't. In both cases the results are the same. The gap between generations only gets wider and children and parents grow further apart.

Interpersonal relationships and problems within the family have long intrigued me. After *Taal* I began to delve more deeply on the subject and *Yaadein* was born. It's a film about a family in the year 2001. A man of 44 with three daughters. All these years he'd hardly interacted with them. In 18 years may be he's spoken to them for all of 18 hours. Now suddenly, he finds that they're all grown up and strangers to him. He doesn't even have his wife around any longer to help bridge the differences between them. And what's worse, he's now saddled with the unenviable job of finding a match for them.

Yaadein is about a father and his efforts to become a friend to his daughters. Get them married off, one by one. The more he interacts with them the more he learns about them and about himself. It's a film that seeks to tell society that the one relationship that binds the family together is that of friendship. It's not an issue that has been tackled on the Indian film screen before. Certainly not in the way I have tackled it. If the film is a hit it could go a long way in changing people's perceptions. I know my attitude towards my family has changed since I began working on *Yaadein* and Kareena tells me so has

However, despite its inherently serious subject *Yaadein* is a Subhash Ghai film. An entertaining film. But it's not just a love story or a family social. It's a film that takes a peek into an Indian home and shows us that what is happening with Jackie and his three daughters could happen to you and me. That's the reason it didn't need stars. Hrithik (Roshan) and Kareena (Kapoor) were new faces, upcoming stars when I signed them. So are Avani Vasa and Himani Rawat who play Kareena's sisters. It's incredible how alike the three girls look. They could almost be sisters!

Jackie was always my first choice to play the father. For the role of his wife I approached Rati. She had just returned to the industry and I told her very honestly that it was a special appearance. It was a small role but significant to the film. She was ready for the challenge.

For the role of Hrithik's fiancee I'm introducing another new girl, Kiran Rathod. She's a rich man's daughter and looks the part. That's important. My artistes should also be excited about working with me and I must be comfortable with them.

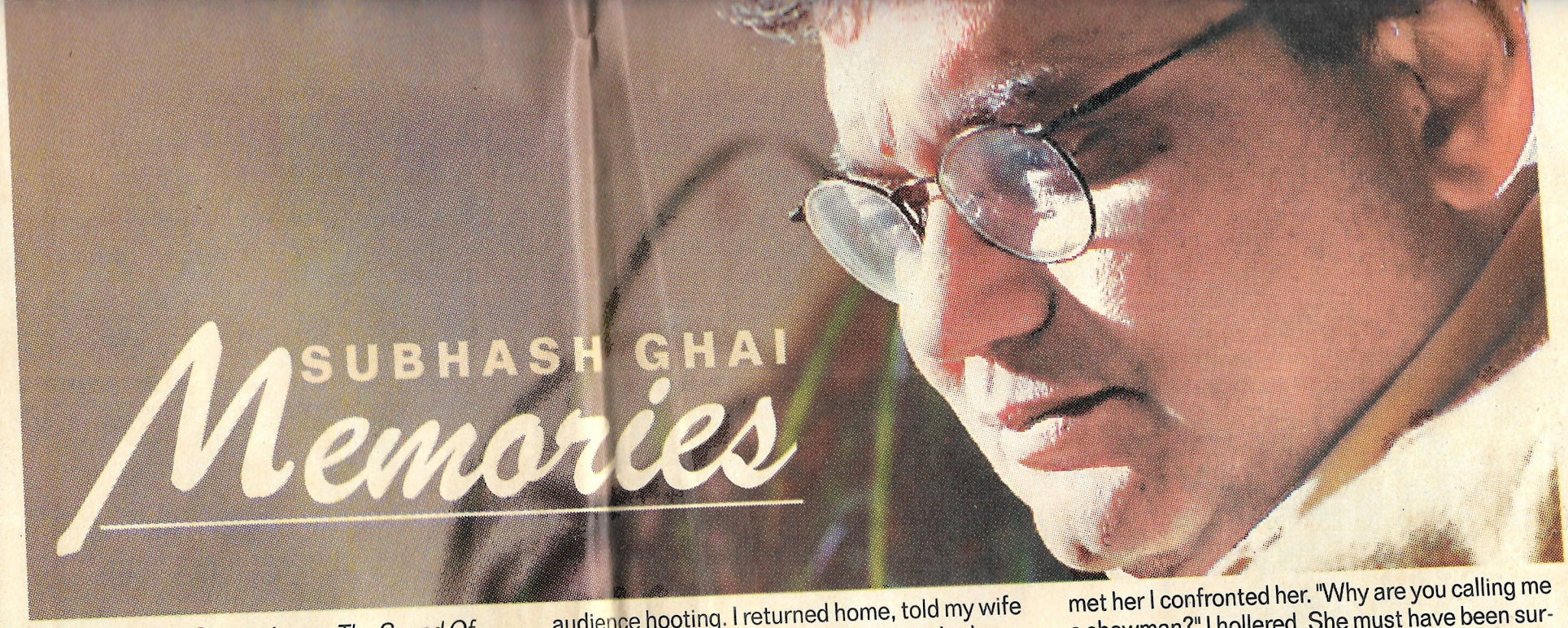
It took me 5-6 months to write the script. I started in January 2000 and on July 15, against the Tower of London, I canned the first shot on Jackie Shroff. By April 2001 the film was in the cans. This has been one of my smoothest films though shooting 60 per cent of the film in London had its problems despite the welcome cooperation from the British Film Corporation. Those who've seen the rushes say that London has never looked so beautiful on the Indian screen.

Yaadein has seven songs. Thank God Anu Malik is a day person unlike AR Rehman who works through the nights. Of course, that's not the reason I opted for Anu over Rehman. It's important for me to work with a music director who can be excited about my project, gives it enough time and gives me tunes that justify my story. By the time I started work on *Yaadein* Rehman had got busy with his international projects. For *Taal* I'd turned to him because that film had been a musical. It was based on music, it had no real story. *Yaadein* has a definite story and Anu and Anand Bakshi have given me songs that are apt for my story. Every song is a part of the film, like a scene and integrated into the story. I enjoyed picturising them!

Which was the most difficult song to shoot? The love song where the girl tells the boy she loves him and he admits he does too. A simple love song is always difficult to shoot because by now I think 3,600 love songs have been shown on the Hindi screen. How do you make these *ped ke peechey* songs different. I usually try to avoid them by in this instance I had a *'Dil mile...'* to do justice to. I hope it's different!

Yaadein is part of my memories now. And everytime I think of it I'm sure to recall the climax. We were in Malaysia, in a boat and without any of us realising it, the boat drifted towards the high seas. Suddenly, we found ourselves in danger and had to take a dive and struggle to get to the wooden jetty some way off. I don't know how to swim and for about three minutes I was in the water, struggling for my life. Then Hrithik and my driver Babu pulled me out. I could have drowned that day. These two gave me a new life. May be I lived to complete *Yaadein*...

RB



SUBHASH GHAI Memories

The first film I saw: It was *The Sound Of Music*. I saw it in Delhi's Sheila theatre in 70 mm. There are snatches of the evergreen classic in so many of my movies.

My first day at the FTII, Pune: It was pouring and arrived for my first class at the institute in a raincoat two hours late. The professor took one look at me standing by the door and said sternly, "*Bahar khada raho.*" So I stood outside in the rain till hunger drove me to the canteen. Sitting down at a table I ordered two *chappatis* and meat. The *chapattis* arrived but instead of mutton (which we refer to as meat in Punjabi) the waiter dumped a bowl of salt in front of me. "Where's the meat?" I asked him bemused. "There," he said, pointing to the salt. It took me a couple of days to learn that "meat" is "salt" in Marathi.

The first cheque I got: It was a cheque for Rs 200 for Rajshri Productions' *Taqdeer*. I sent Rs 50 to my mother, put Rs 100 in the bank and with the remaining Rs 50 went to Pune to meet my fiancee. We married soon after.

audience hooting. I returned home, told my wife the film had flopped and went to sleep. In the evening I was woken up by my producer with the good news that people seemed to be reacting positively to the cop caper. I wouldn't take him seriously. I thought he was just trying to cushion the blow. He kept telling me the same thing for the next 3-4 days. I still wouldn't believe him. It was only when our Delhi distributor invited me to a show in the capital and I went on stage to find the audience cheering wildly when I was introduced, that it finally sunk in that I had given a hit. I was saved!

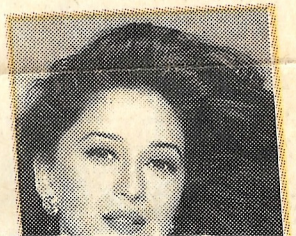
My first big debacle: It was definitely *Trimurti*. And when I heard that the film had bombed I smiled and thought to myself, "Thank God it's finally happened!" I was waiting for this moment for years and I was glad that after flying high for so long I was finally brought down to earth with a thud. Till *Trimurti* happened I must have given at least 10 hits. And always been relegated to the fourth or fifth page. When *Trimurti* flopped it made front page news in the *Indian Express*.

met her I confronted her. "Why are you calling me a showman?" I hollered. She must have been surprised by my outburst not knowing that in the North people equated showman with show off. It was only later that someone explained to me that the term was not insulting. It meant a man of show. A maker who believed in grandeur. Who made BIG movies with great songs. That was me.I was appeased!

My first day of shooting abroad: We were in Vancouver, shooting for *Prem Deewane*. In a helicopter, chasing after a car. I wanted a bird's eye view of the scene. I got it. It was only later that I realised how risky my sky ride had been.

My first reaction to Jackie Shroff: This guy is star material!

My enduring opinion of Anil Kapoor: He is an actor in search of excellence. His eyes are forever searching. He's a man who's always eager to



My first film premiere: I was playing Raj Khanna's pilot friend in Shakti Samanta's *Aradhana* so I got to go for the premiere too. And ended up feeling like a wallflower. Everyone rushed by me, chasing after the new superstar, Rajesh Khanna. I was totally ignored!

The first time I was approached for an autograph: It happened when I was still in college. I used to write, direct and act in plays even then and the plays were very popular with the campus crowd. At inter-collegiate festivals, students from other colleges would come to see my plays. And ask me for autographs.

My first fan letter: Gratifyingly it was for *Aradhana*. A fan wrote to tell me that I'd performed well in the film, even in a brief role, and looked good. It made my day!

The first star I signed for a film: It was Shatrughan Sinha, my friend from the struggling days. For two years we'd been the best of buddies, sharing everything. Those days he used to stay in a lodge, renting out a cot for Rs 11. I was better off because I was staying with my aunt. When I was signed to direct a film I told my producer, NN Sippy that I wanted Shatru to play the title role. He agreed. So did Shatru. And *Kalicharan* went on the floors.

My first superhit film: It was *Kalicharan* and I

The first actor I idolised: Dilip Kumar, he's the best! Such a versatile actor. He's played such a wide variety of characters from *Gunga Jumna, Mughal-e-Azam* and *Devdas* to *Saudagar*. Generations of actors have followed his school of acting. He's an institution. *The* actor!

My first encounter with Dilip Kumar: I had developed the idea of a film focussing on the realtionship between a 60-year-old grandfather and his 16-year-old grandson. I took the story of *Vidhaata* to Gulshan Rai. He loved it but wanted to know who would play the grandfather. I suggested Dilip Kumar's name. "Go talk to him," my producer urged. My Bangalore distributor fixed a story narration with the thespian for me. He liked the plot. "The boy knows his job," he told my distributor approvingly but insisted on a bound script before allotting the dates. I gave it to him. And he gave me his dates. Within days I was back for a second meeting. I was told by at least 350 filmmakers not to make my film with Dilip Kumar. I had just one question for him when I went to Sun n' Sand Hotel to sign him for the film."Who will direct *Vidhaata*, Subhash Ghai or Dilip Kumar?" He stirred his tea and smiled, "You'll be the one to suffer. It's your ship, you're the captain. I'm just an actor." He kept his word.

The first real compliment I received: It was from the great Raj Kapoor. He had seen a song from *Gautam Govind, 'Ek ritu aaye, ek ritu jayee...'* on Doordarshan. He took my number from Daboo (Randhir Kapoor) who was friend, and called me up to say, "My son, I've seen the song and I thought it was brilliantly picturised." I was so moved by the unexpected compliment, more so because the film hadn't done too well and I was feeling low.

The first time I was called a showman: I think it was Prochi Badshah of *Stardust* who gave

My first impression of Madhuri Dixit: She's so innocent!

Raaj Kumar's reaction to *Saudagar*: Surprisingly positive. I had given 6-7 hits by the time I approached him with the script of *Saudagar* so he was familiar with my name and work. In fact, he had been telling me for some time that he wanted to work with me. "Jaani, I'm tired of working with the *halwais* and *mithaiwallas*," he'd sign dispiritedly. As soon as I had a role for him I went to him and he was very welcoming.

An unforgettable review: It was for *Ram Lakhan*. A critic described the film as a "textbook of Indian commercial cinema". I was overwhelmed!

The first award I bagged: I think it was the award for Best Director for *Saudagar* and I felt absolutely nothing. But awards have long ceased to mean anything to me. I think they are like a game of housie. If you're lucky you pick a winning card, otherwise you're out.

I don't think 11 guys can judge who's the best from a select list of 10. In fact, everytime the jury changes so does the winner. If it were left to me I'd declare all 10 guys the winners as a mark of respect for their talent. Today with so many commercial awards going, trophies and statuettes have come to mean even less. When my daughter was at Universal Studio, Los Angeles, she bought a replica of an Academy Award for $5 and presented it to me. So now I have the biggest award of them all. The Oscar, right here in my office. •

ROSHMILA BHATTACHARYA